

AGENDA ITEM III A

PROPOSED ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Southern University-Baton Rouge

Ph.D. in Nursing

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 1994 Desegregation Settlement Agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice and the State of Louisiana provided for the establishment of select academic programs at predominantly black institutions of higher education in Louisiana, including the Ph.D. in Nursing at Southern University-Baton Rouge.

In March, 1998, Southern University submitted to the Board of Regents a proposal for the Ph.D. program in Nursing which was assessed by a team of external consultants in July, 1998. In its report to the Regents, this review committee recommended that consideration of the program be deferred indefinitely, pending submission of a revised proposal which addressed specific weaknesses, particularly in the areas of program design, program development, faculty recruitment, faculty development, and financial resources needed to fund program costs. At its meeting of October, 1999, the Regents received the review committee's report and directed Southern University to proceed with necessary corrective measures to address identified weaknesses and problematic areas.

In November, 1999, Southern University submitted a revised proposal for the Ph.D. program. The staff of the Regents, with the consent of the University, engaged the services of the same consultants to conduct the new assessment. The review committee team visited Southern University in early February 2000. Shortly after this visit, there were some changes in Nursing faculty at the University which would have a direct effect upon personnel resources needed to offer the proposed Ph.D. The review committee was kept current of these changes and issued its final report in April 2000. Southern University submitted its response to the review committee's subsequent report in late May.

CONCLUSION OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

In its report, the review committee concluded as follows:

The Dean and the faculty of the School of Nursing and the administration of Southern University-Baton Rouge are to be commended for their hard work and diligent effort in moving forward with their proposal for a Ph.D. in Nursing. It is obvious that the Dean and the faculty took the 1998 recommendations of the consultants to heart, and in fact, they have successfully met all recommendations put forward....The doctoral program,

and even the School of Nursing as a whole, would not be at its current stage of development and maturity without the leadership of its Dean....The faculty of the School have made an extraordinary investment of time. Talent and effort to maintain the quality of current programs while meeting requirements of a new program.

In the interim between the site visit and the finalizing of this report, there has been one faculty resignation, one faculty who relinquished her administrative position to return full-time to teaching, and two threatened, but rescinded, resignations. The consultants considered these changes and acknowledge that it is difficult to discern the true meaning and potential impact on the proposed program....[Yet], we [have] determined that existing faculty resources are minimal to mount the program.

[Therefore], the consultants recommend approval of the Ph.D. program in Nursing assuming there are no further reduction in faculty resources....We believe it is imperative that the Board of Regents closely monitor faculty recruitment and retention for the next several years to ensure that the faculty numbers increase and not decrease.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Below is a summary of consultants' recommendations with relevant responses from Southern University in italics thereafter:

1. Existing research courses and interdisciplinary offerings should be utilized to strengthen program content, maximize faculty resources, and support course enrollments.

The Ph.D. Advisory Council has already identified several existing doctoral-level courses which can be utilized in the programs; others will be sought or created.

2. Admission to the program should be restricted to students with previous expertise and/or specific interest in health care of vulnerable women and children.

Admission criteria have been revised to require a statement from the prospective student stating their interest in health needs of vulnerable women and children.

3. A full-time Associate/Assistant Dean is necessary.

Discussions are underway with the administration to resolve the heavy administrative burden in the School.

4. Faculty recruitments should be specifically targeted to meet program needs. The School must maintain an aggressive recruitment effort.

A faculty recruitment plan has been developed which included needed research proficiencies, priority content areas, and a schedule for hiring consistent with program implementation plans.

5. Start-up packages for new tenure-track faculty are needed.

Start-up packages, including released time and seed money, will be made available to tenure-track new faculty.

6. The University must allow the School of Nursing to carry over desegregation funds from one year to the next.

The School is already permitted to carry-over desegregation funding.

7. A contingency plan for the possible loss of federal funding should be developed.

A contingency plan for loss of federal funding has been developed.

8. Indirect costs earned through external grants should be returned to the School of Nursing.

The administration is still reviewing a proposed policy which could return a portion of indirect costs from research grants to the School.

9. The University should provide a written commitment for 5 additional FTE faculty positions.

A written plan for faculty appointments has been approved. Included are:

- a. *Graduate Chair - 50% appointment to Ph.D. program*
- b. *Associate/Assistant Dean*
- c. *Grants Manager*
- d. *Methodologist/Statistician*
- e. *5 additional FTE faculty*

10. The University and the School should recognize two faculty tracks—teaching/research and teaching/clinical practice. This would promote greater faculty stability. Clinical track faculty should be responsible for clinical instruction

The Vice Chancellor for Academic affairs is currently reviewing a plan to institute a clinical faculty track for select faculty in the School of Nursing.

11. Computer and information access is needed for all administrators, faculty, and students.

The School is fully equipped with fiber optic access and state-of-the-art computer, web, video, and CD ROM capabilities.

12. New institutional guidelines are needed for research proposal preparation, submission, review, and award management.

A new Vice Chancellor for Research has recently been appointed. All policies and procedure relative to proposal production and grant management are currently under review.

13. Faculty duties should be examined carefully to balance administrative, research, and instructional responsibilities.

The School of Nursing will periodically evaluate its structure and organization to assure the adequacy of faculty resources for all three program levels.

14. The program should remain small. Regents approval should be sought prior to increasing numbers of enrollees.

The School will admit only 5 to 10 students per year.

15. The Regents should monitor closely faculty recruitment and retention; the current faculty vacancy must be filled and additional faculty hired in accordance with plans outlined in the proposal.

The vacancy created by the recent faculty resignation will be filled this summer; a pool of qualified applicants has already been identified.

STAFF ANALYSIS

It is clear from both the tone and substance of the consultants' report that prospects for development of a quality Ph.D. program in Nursing at Southern University-Baton Rouge are good. While there were many suggestions for refinements, the basic structure for the program is in place. The sole seriously troubling issue is the adequacy of faculty resources. Even if all currently authorized Nursing faculty positions were filled, the consultants agreed that numbers of faculty were minimal. Hence, it is imperative that the University commit itself fully to filling the additional faculty positions which the consultants recommended.

Other problematic areas that will require additional attention include:

1. Reducing the administrative burdens of the Dean, including the appointment of an Assistant/Associate Dean.
2. Implementation of the faculty recruitment plan.
3. Development of a University policy which allows for return of a percentage of indirect costs from research grants to the School.
4. Implementation of a clinical faculty position.
5. Continued augmentation of computer and informational resources.
6. Improvements in the University's administration of research grant programs.

7. Limiting student enrollment.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The staff agrees with the consultants that the proposed program should proceed, but, given the minimal numbers of faculty, the program should not be implemented until additional faculty have been appointed. Accordingly, the staff recommends conditional approval for the program, but with a caveat that Southern University submit a progress report by March 1, 2001 addressing consultants requirements for the hiring of sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified faculty. To that end, it would be reasonable to expect that the University will by that time have filled the currently vacant position and hired one other additional full-time faculty. This progress report should also update efforts made to correct other perceived weaknesses and deficiencies. The staff anticipates implementation of this program, effective Fall 2001.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant conditional approval for the proposed Ph.D. program in Nursing (CIP Code 51.1608) at Southern University, subject to the following stipulations:

- 1. By March 1, 2001, the Southern University-Baton Rouge shall submit to the Commissioner of Higher Education a report which:*
 - a. Documents the hiring of two additional Ph.D. in Nursing faculty - one to fill the currently vacant position and one to fill a new position; and*
 - b. Updates efforts of the University to addresses other weaknesses and problematic areas the staff has identified.*
- 2. Upon assessment of the report described above, the Board of Regents shall determine a date for implementation of the program and whether any additional progress reports should be required.*